

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

RAMIREZ CANYON PARK
5750 RAMIREZ CANYON ROAD
MALIBU, CALIFORNIA 90265
PHONE (310) 589-3200
FAX (310) 589-3207



December 7, 2009

Ms. Mary Benson
Ms. Nina Royal, Editor
North Valley Reporter
P. O. Box 674
Tujunga, California 91043

Correcting the Record Re Prop K Mandeville Canyon Grant

Dear Editor Royal and Ms. Benson:

Your article in the November 2009 North Valley Reporter, "Local Activists Kick Consultants to the Curb," recounts the controversy over bicycles in Los Angeles City parks. In remarks made within the article, an inaccuracy has unfortunately been perpetuated regarding the original Proposition K grant to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) for the year 2000 purchase of a portion of a 239-acre Mandeville Canyon ownership in the Santa Monica Mountains. The seller was Burt Boeckman, and a tract map was under City review for development of the site at the time.

In short, no Prop K funds from that grant nor any other funds were disbursed to the Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association (CORBA). That group was not a signatory to the grant agreement and should not be saddled with an allegation that they "... failed to honor their commitment," where there was never any such obligation upon the organization.

Background Facts: The original vision outlined in the 1997 grant application was indeed for up to \$50,000 of the grant to be used by the Hollywood YMCA for an Adventure Trails youth bicycle program that would buy bicycles and provide for a storage facility on the property acquired for parkland. The Conservancy and MRCA prepared the acquisition grant application on behalf of the City of Los Angeles, in a joint effort to purchase the Boeckman property for open space and recreation, fully in keeping with the grant provisions of Prop K. Although we applied for up to \$5 million in Prop K, the eventual granted amount was about half, with the other half matched by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The City did get its money's worth: it now owns in fee the trail

access parcel for which the grant was made, with the purchase price based upon an approved appraisal, and a festering land use controversy was solved to the benefit of the environment and the public. The Conservancy, using \$2.234 million dollars in State of California funds for its match, facilitated the purchase of the remaining acreage by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, thus protecting a premier urban interface open space and wilderness gateway, available for hiking, horseback riding, and yes, mountain bicycling by thousands of users every year, including many families and kids. MRCA rangers patrol and maintain the lands. The property provides the key Westside trail access and critical viewshed to the larger 1400-acre MRCA-owned Westridge Canyon Back Wilderness Park, and contributes to the "Big Wild," the 20,000+-acre core habitat including and surrounding Topanga State Park.

The Prop K grant did not provide guarantees for maintaining ongoing programming. Subsequent budget downturns affected all parties: Neither the Hollywood YMCA nor MRCA were able to subsidize and sustain with their own funds the ongoing staffing and interpretive program elements necessary to go forward with and maintain the original Adventure Trails program. Adventure Trails is no longer a program of the Hollywood YMCA to our knowledge.

To reiterate, no city dollars were disbursed to the Conservancy or MRCA for this bike program, and, and certainly no funds, nor any obligation to provide services, transferred to CORBA. All the initial planning and early trips were completely subsidized by the MRCA, with no Prop K reimbursement.

While we understand that there are strong feelings about the City trails controversy, I do trust that this letter will obviate any misconception or rumor about the appropriateness of Prop K funds used to buy and transfer to the City of Los Angeles the beautiful parkland in Mandeville Canyon. Certainly the ongoing popularity of its well-used trails by all ages is a testament to the effectiveness of Prop K in creating parkland and recreational opportunities for all.

Sincerely,



RORIE SKEI
Chief Deputy Director

cc: Ms. Lynn Brown, ETI National Trail Coordinator